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UFOs not fly-by-night objects for Massachusetts group

By Rose Foley



Triangular-shaped objects of unknown origin were spotted recently in the remotes of North Adams, a western Massachusetts community. A flurry of similar sightings occurred further north in Magnolia back in December.

The shape of the objects is similar to what was seen not long ago about 40 miles north of New York City.

Investigation of the UFOs — the familiar acronym for unidentified flying objects — is being handled by the Mutual UFO Network, Inc. (MUFON), an international, not-for-profit, scientific organization devoted to investigating the UFO phenomenon.

The UFO Enigma

Nationally, its membership totals 1,200. About 35 people belong to the Massachusetts branch. There's even a 24-hour UFO hotline for people wanting to report sightings.

Barry J. Greenwood, assistant state director of the Bay State's UFO network and a UFO investigator, takes the unproven occurrences seriously. He brushes off scoffed remarks with logicality.

"UFOs — we don't know what they are or where they come from," he said. "I don't think even the government has an answer to what the phenomenon is all about. I think they're just as baffled as we are."

Greenwood can rattle off official government investigations of unexplained happenings. The most elaborate of the official check-intos is Project Blue Book, opened by the U.S. Air Force in 1947 and closed in 1969.

Blue Book concluded that there is no national threat posed by UFOs. Greenwood thinks the facts point to a different conclusion.

He said several sightings have occurred since Blue Book was closed. Copies of official UFO investigations obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show that several cases are "missing" information. Others, labeled as "top secret," are blacked out with Magic Marker. For three weeks during October and November, 1975, the United States issued a security option 3 alert from Montana to Maine, warning all air force bases to keep an eye out for strange objects.

"That's telling us there is something important here. All people are not kooks or nuts or drunks," said Greenwood.

Massive Collection

In 21 years, the 32-year-old Greenwood has amassed an enormous collection of UFO-related material. It's one of the most extensive in existence. For starters, the collection includes about 500 published books, some in French and Spanish. One of the books, "Clear Intent," he co-wrote along with Lawrence Fawcett, fellow UFO investigator.

The collection includes another 200 to 300 mass-marketed books.

The list goes on. He has rare manuscripts, 40 to 50 file drawers of periodicals, 60 to 70 volumes of newspaper clippings. One of his many filing cabinets located in an upstairs room of his home holds government documents collected over the last seven years or so.

That's not all. There's microfilm — 120 rolls amounting to 140,000 pages.

Air Force film clips include eight rolls the government itself lost track of.

"Ninety to 95 percent of all sightings can be logically explained," said Greenwood. "Only five to 10 percent are genuine phenomenon."

Revealing The Sightings

Greenwood defines UFO as an object sighted either visually or with instrumentation where the witness cannot identify the object after rigorous investigation.

A recent Gallup Poll found that more than 57 percent of Americans believe that UFOs are real. Fifteen million Americans claim to have had UFO sightings.

Greenwood himself has never seen a UFO.

"The vast majority of sightings occur in remote areas," he said, adding that shows there could be intelligent life behind the phenomenon. "They seem to try to avoid being seen by large numbers of people."

He said the sightings, which are relatively rare, cannot be predicted, although they can occur in pockets. They used to occur in five-year gaps, with a rush of sightings happening in 1947, 1952 and 1957. The sightings picked up again from 1965 to 1967. In 1973, there was a rush of sightings around the world.

There really has not been a big wave since then. In 1982, there were 14 unexplained flying objects sighted in Massachusetts. Eleven sightings were reported in Essex County and three were reported in Middlesex County.

There hasn't been much activity in the '80s, said Greenwood, adding that there were less than a handful of sightings in all of Massachusetts during 1984.

Passed Through Marlboro

Things were different in December, 1909 when a UFO wave shook up Massachusetts. An aerial vehicle was spotted in the central and eastern parts of the state, beginning in Fitchburg and moving on to Marlboro, Boston and Salem where it turned around and headed back to Boston and on to Worcester. Some people said they saw occupants.

During the 1950s, a Beverly woman claimed to have been abducted by an unknown source.

Occasionally, there is physical evidence of a phenomenon. A case in the Worcester area a few years ago shows that an automobile's magnetic field was altered after a strange object passed through the area. In other cases, the object left holes in the ground, burn marks, broken tree limbs and dehydrated soil. In still others, animals were killed.

Changing With The Times

Sightings have changed over the years, said Greenwood.

In the 1950s and 1960s, disk shaped objects that hovered in midair and then sped off were popular. Now, the boomerang shape is picking up in number. Other objects are cigar-shaped or egg-shaped. Sometimes, bright lights or a formation of lights in the sky are noticed.

Greenwood doesn't have an explanation for the objects. He says they're an "open-ended mystery."

"We can't make 90-degree turns without slowing down," he said, adding that known objects can't travel at such high speeds attributed to the UFOs.

They could be anchored by a biological lifeform more advanced than we are, he said.

"Again, where they're from, we can't say," he said.

The Massachusetts branch of the UFO Network can be reached by writing to Mutual UFO Network, Inc., P.O. Box 176, Stoneham, MA 02180. Anyone wishing to report a UFO sighting can call (617) 944-0686. Also, a Massachusetts MUFON newsletter is published.

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